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EASTERN EUROPEAN INTELLIGENCER

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Eastern European Reaction to the Kennedy Shooting

Eastern European commentary on the Kennedy shooting has echoed the horror and indignation expressed throughout the world.

Official commentary has been factual and balanced with occasional overtones of sorrow at the loss of a great world figure. Yugoslav President Tito expressed his sympathies and deep consternation in a cable to Mrs. Kennedy. Eastern Europe's leaders undoubtedly are uneasy about the breakdown of public order in the US and other parts of the world, and are probably genuinely concerned about the possibility of contagion to their own restive societies.

Unofficial commentary, however, has seized upon the incident to point up the shortcomings of American democracy and to indict reactionary elements for creating an atmosphere of violence in America. Propagandists have linked the latest shooting with the assassination of President Kennedy and Dr. King as irrefutable evidence of a sinister plot sponsored by the extreme right, and have questioned the morals of a society which allows it to happen.

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East Germany's Curious Attitude Toward the West

Despite the harsh treatment of West Germany in last week's East German-Soviet communique, the Ulbricht regime's recent actions toward the West appear to have modified.

Some 60,000 spectators from 19 countries traveled to and from a gymnastics festival in Berlin last weekend without interference from East German border authorities. While East German media kept up a running tirade against the festival, calling it an "encroachment" by Bonn of the city's special status, the regime honored a previous agreement to provide special trains for the visitors. Furthermore, Pankow has not enforced the travel ban on Bonn officials since Berlin Mayor Schuetz was stopped in late April.

The East Germans may be warming up to the idea of negotiating postal claims with Bonn on the latter's terms.

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The East German postal minister hinted [redacted] that his government was interested in discussing charges for an amount in the neighborhood of what West Germany deems correct rather than the exorbitant and unrealistic amount previously demanded by Pankow. While both sides are still far apart on the cumulative total, prospects for eventual GDR-FRG negotiations appear better than they have since 1966.

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In another curious move, the East Germans released an American prisoner, Professor Ronald Wiedenhoeft, before trying him as has been the case with previous US citizens arrested and held by the regime. Wiedenhoeft was released on Monday after eight months pre-trial detention on charges of espionage. The price for Wiedenhoeft's release reportedly included the issuance of visas to East German commercial travelers to the US. Despite such "ransom" the East Germans seemed eager to accommodate the US in this case and moved swiftly during the last two weeks to bring about Wiedenhoeft's release.

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Prague Denies Times Stories On Soviet Activities In Czechoslovakia

The press spokesman of the Ministry of National Defense issued statements on 5 June denying two stories which recently appeared in the New York Times. The first statement denied that Soviet military personnel were involved in the flight from Czechoslovakia of General Sejna. The second statement denied a report that Soviet tanks were present in Czechoslovakia. General Cepicky, who has been appointed a special press spokesman to handle publicity connected with the forthcoming Warsaw Pact exercise, stated that this latter Times article is aimed at undermining Czechoslovak-Soviet friendship.

The speed with which Prague denied these Times reports suggests the articles touched on sensitive areas. Tad Szulc, who wrote the report concerning the Soviet involvement in Sejna's defection, informed the Embassy on 1 June that he had been given this information by unnamed high Czechoslovak sources. According to Szulc's sources, during the recent visit of Soviet Marshal Grechko, Czechoslovak Defense Dzur requested Grechko to remove quietly General Kushchev, the Warsaw Pact representative in Prague; Kushchev allegedly had interfered in Czechoslovak internal affairs by prevailing upon Czech authorities to give Sejna a passport. Also

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according to Szulc's informants, Grechko took Kushchev with him when he left Prague on 23 May.

The denial of the report concerning Soviet tanks is also curious because, according to UPI, the Czechoslovaks themselves publicized the arrival of the Soviets in a television report.

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Poles May be Mending Fences in Prague

Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Adam Kruczkowski held talks in Prague on 3-4 June with Foreign Minister Jiri Hajek, according to a Warsaw radio announcement of 5 June. The Czechs have not yet announced the visit.

Kruczkowski is a young moderate, and is one of the two deputy foreign ministers appointed last April. He has been increasingly active in bloc affairs within the ministry, suggesting that he is slated to be the replacement for Deputy Foreign Minister Naszkowski who has been effectively ousted except for the formalities.

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Kruczkowski's visit to Prague may be designed to put mutual relations on a more even keel. Since Polish party boss Gomulka's 23 May meeting in Warsaw with the Czechoslovak ambassador, the Poles have privately said that their anxieties about developments in Prague have subsided. The tone of Polish press coverage of Czechoslovak events has also changed, although it still remains pointedly critical of "anti-socialist" elements there.

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Railway Workers Strike In Czechoslovakia

Radio Prague reported on 5 June that employees of the railway station in Zilina, a city in Central Slovakia, went on strike on 4 June. The workers were demanding that the management of the station be removed. In the interest of keeping rail traffic moving, the radio added, the management was temporarily suspended.

According to East Germans railway workers, there was also discontent and talk of a strike on 2 June among railroad workers in Bohemia. This strike, however, apparently did not take place.

The strikes, and threats of strikes, which have taken place recently indicate that Czechoslovak laborers, encouraged by the political changes, intend to press the Dubcek regime to ameliorate their situation.

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Czechoslovakia's Politics Disqualify Her TV Competition Entries

The line-up in Eastern Europe for and against the new Czechoslovak regime was repeated at the recent first international television festival in Sofia.

On 23 May the Bulgarian member of the competition jury proposed exclusion of Czech, Slovak, Hungarian and Finnish entries. (Hungary has been supporting Czechoslovakia) Half the jury members opposed the proposal and the Rumanian delegate abstained. The Yugoslav delegation and part of the Polish delegation were opposed. Presumably the other East Europeans voted in favor of exclusion.

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